

SENIOR CONVOCATION

D. Donald Cowan

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The Senior Convocation was an innovation when we introduced it at the University of Dallas eight years ago. Since that time other schools have initiated honors day for somewhat similar reasons. Here, however, the focus is much more clearly on the senior class. This ceremony is intended to be a family affair, an internal celebration in which we talk to each other openly in perfect certainty that we understand one another whereas the graduation exercise is public and consequently more guardedly decorous. The Senior Convocation is my favorite of all the ceremonies we undertake; ^{of the university} you form the most intelligent, the most receptive audience any speaker is likely to face. Should I choose to be the standup comedian of the day, I could draw from a four year field of reference for in jokes; if I were instructed to inspire you, I could tap lightly over a hundred great works we share with some intimacy to wring from them again with barely a reference the distillation of glory in the human spirit. My task is simpler today: to remind you briefly of the kind of education you have had and to point out a few of the honors ^{which} that education has already won for the class of 1972.

Yours has been a liberal education. It is not a technical education, although you have mastered many skills. We have not trained you for a job--and there will be times you will regret we have not done so. We have not ground you to the shape of the establishment,

although you understand better than most the strength one draws from the persistence of tradition. We have not promised you happiness. What we have done is place on you a bigger bet--the major wager of a liberal education. We suppose we have transformed you into persons of consequence - into one of the relatively few who will take responsibility for the world and change it in the direction it should go. Your education is more like that of those who will come ten years after you than it is like your contemporaries. Therefore you will set the styles, you will be the ones who will save the world from barbarism in the difficult years ahead.

But to point out to you that your education is aimed at a time ten years away is not to say that it is not admired now. The present class has continued the fine tradition of winning outside honors we have come to expect from our seniors, despite the fact that far fewer were offered this year across the nation. Woodrow Wilsons, for example, are not offered this year, thus breaking our long string of annual winners. Many graduate schools have cut back severely on admissions and fellowships. In the light of this new severity, I am proud to announce the following awards.